



## NAM Rodger

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### *Loving War Speaker Series*

**NAM Rodger**  
**University of Exeter**



**"British Naval Warfare in the 'Long' 18th Century:  
 A Warrior Elite? "**

**Wednesday, May 25, 2005  
 12:00 p.m.**

**Mershon Center for International Security Studies  
 1501 Neil Avenue  
 Room 120**



The British navy in the age of Nelson cultivated an ethic of destruction that has rarely been seen in warfare at sea (when Nelson chided his ship's carpenter, after his great victory at Copenhagen, for failing to make the captured ships seaworthy, the carpenter boldly replied: "Your Lordship is so much better at smashing ships than I am at repairing them.") What were the origins of "the Nelson touch"? Was it the influence of one man, of a social class, or of exposure to the constant carnage of warfare afloat?

**Dr. NAM Rodger** (Ph.D., Oxford) spent seventeen years in the Public Record Office as an Assistant Keeper of Public Records, 1974-1991. After resigning from the public service, he began a Naval History of Britain with the support of the National Maritime Museum, the Navy Records Society and the Society for Nautical Research. The Museum gave him the title of Anderson Senior Research Fellow. In 1999 I moved to Exeter as Senior Lecturer, and the following year was appointed Professor of Naval History.

In 2003 Rodger was elected a Fellow of the British Academy; he is also a member of the Society of Antiquaries (1985) & the Royal Historical Society (1980).

This talk is part of a quarter-long series arranged by Geoffrey Parker around the theme of *"Loving War," and is offered as a graduate seminar (HST 767). The syllabus, including each speaker's recommended readings, is available [here](#).*

### *About the Series:*

Many cultures today and in the past see war as good and so build up cadres of killers that threaten the security and stability of their neighbors. This asymmetry raises many issues:

- How are such cadres of killers found and trained; what motivates them; to what extent do they draw on tradition and to what extent do they forge their own? That is: do they kill because that is what their culture expects or because it works?
- Do cultures that embrace war as good have any distinctive characteristics?
- To what extent is a warrior culture natural or universal? To what extent do individual societies promote, shape, control and suppress the instinct to "love war"?
- What connects and what divides the warrior's understanding of fighting as a heroic individual pursuit and the state's conception of war as protective public policy?
- Do all societies understand, observe and enforce that distinction? If not, is the distinction a hallmark of "civilization" or "modernity"?

- What happens when this distinction is not honored?
- Above all, do the killers "just do it" or do they actually enjoy killing?

*Upcoming Events:*

April 6, 2005: [Nicola DiCosmo](#)  
April 13, 2005: [Karl Friday](#)  
April 20, 2005: [Thomas Kuehne](#)  
April 27, 2005: [Robert H. Pape](#)  
May 4: [Eliot Cohen](#)  
May 11: [Peter A. Fritzsche](#)  
May 18, 2005: [Barry Strauss](#)  
May 25, 2005: N.A.M. Rodger